

U.S.S. Independence

Feb 11, 1972

Dear Mom & Dad,
Mary & Mike,

It is Friday afternoon and the ship will set sail before long. We came aboard yesterday after a flight in a C-130 cargo plane to Sicily and then in a helicopter to the ship. We left Vickie all by herself in Naples, but I think she will get along all right. We were in Naples for two nights and a day so she got a chance to learn the ropes before being on her own. The hotel desk clerks speak English and can help her to get around and see the sights. During our one day we found our way to the train station

and took the train to a nearby town where they have excavated the ruins of a Roman city covered by the lava from Mt. Vesuvius. The town is smaller than Pompeii, but wealthier and just as interesting. Mt. Vesuvius is very near and we took a bus up to the base of the cinder cone. There is a chairlift to the rim, but it ^{was} chilly and drizzling so we didn't go up. Naples is a pretty town and I'm sorry we didn't get to stay longer.

The ship is enormous and holds 5000 men. Room for guests is limited right now and so we are living in the isolation ward!

Fortunately there are no sick people here. The officers have it pretty nice with a large carpeted, wood-paneled lounge and two wardrooms in which to eat. There is a wide selection of food and we pay only \$2.50 per day. Service is instantaneous^{tan} from the army of Philippine stewards. I will write again soon.

Jim
